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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Lord, You provide for us light and salvation; whom shall we fear? You provide strength for our lives; of whom shall we be afraid?

Provide our lawmakers this day boundless energy to accomplish Your purposes. Lift them over the hurdles of fear and panic as You energize them with kindness, peace, and patience. Lord, astound them with the many ways You can help them find solutions to the problems that beset our land. Help them to consider any indecision that may bring catastrophic consequences. May the tone and tenor of their words and deeds this day build bridges of cooperation for the good of our Nation and world.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, December 12, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 2 p.m. today. The Republicans will control the first 30 minutes and the majority the final 30 minutes.

The time from 11:30 until 2 p.m. will be for remarks by our retiring Senators.

Following morning business, we will resume consideration of S. 3637, the TAG extension legislation. The filing deadline for first-degree amendments to that legislation is 1 p.m. today.

FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. REID. Madam President, the headline news for the last many weeks has been the fiscal cliff. In speaking to the President 6 months before the election, a few weeks before the election, a few days before the election and immediately after the election, he indicated we needed to get our financial house in order, and that his goal—to do just that.

But to do that, and because of past experiences, he laid out what he wanted, and it is very simple: The rates for those who have been blessed with economic security in this country will have to be a little higher and middle-class Americans will keep the same tax

structure they have had for the last many years. He will not raise taxes on the middle class, but those people who have done well will have to pay a little bit more. The American people think this is the way it should be.

Now just a little bit of history. I have said this before, but I will go into a little more detail today. When I first became the leader, I took a trip with a number of Senators to South America, countries that we American Senators had never been to, such as Bolivia. It was a wonderful trip. It was great for our country and good for the Senators to learn more about that most important part of the world to America.

I was very fixed on who I wanted to go on that trip with me, but the two I asked to go were Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, who had been chairman of the Budget Committee, and KENT CONRAD, who was the chairman of the Budget Committee at the time. Those two fine Senators spent about 18 hours seated side by side, both having tablets to write on, and they were working on the No. 1 issue they thought important for this country, which was what we should do about the future of our country economically. They came up with an idea that was very good. It had worked before on closing military bases.

We had military bases that we had been trying to close since World War I, and we couldn't do it. We didn't have the political will to do it. So we had a base closing commission. With the base closing commission we said: OK, we are going to have a commission that will work on this and they will report back to us. There will be no filibusters, no amendments, just an up-or-down vote. We did that. We had two rounds of those, and we closed scores of bases and saved the country hundreds of billions of dollars.

That is what Judd Gregg and KENT CONRAD patterned their legislation on. They would have an appointed commission that would report back to us, no

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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